THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSIC RAGTIME

P.O. BOX 8 KING, ONT., CANADA

Volume 4, Number 4 July-August, 1965

RECORDS

We are looking forward to announcing a new Society record release in early fall. This will feature a very talented professional ragtimer playing a real variety of numbers by Joplin, Scott, Lamb, Marshall, James P. Johnson, Jelly Roll Morton and others. We feel this new LP will be one of the major milestones in the current revival of ragtime, and that it will offer "something for everyone," no matter what your tastes may be.

A second Society LP is slated for release in 1965 — probably just before year-end. This will contain a potpourri of performers, styles and numbers; specifically, three of the Society's more talented members will give "live" performances, with a number of piano rolls rounding out the program.

Watch this space for further announcements.

SHEET MUSIC

The Ragtime Society and The Ragtime Review are working on plans for a merger of their respective sheet music reprinting operations. Under the proposed scheme, Russ Cassidy and Treb Tichenor would supply the original material from their extensive sheet music collections, and the Society would handle the printing and distribution of the reprints. We hope to be able to announce the merger as a fait accompli in the next issue.

This new arrangement would mean that reprint subscribers are assured top quality, both in the rags selected for reproduction, and in the actual printing method with which Reprint Club members are already familiar. Rags are printed on heavy Offset Book paper; each page is printed one side only, so that the entire piece may be scotch-taped together (we recommend the "invisible" Scotch Mending Tape) and spread out on your piano rack (no pages to turn). Price per rag to non-participants of the Reprint Club will be $1 postpaid; future reprints will be announced, as they are issued, in both the Newsletter and The Ragtime Review.

ORDER FORM

Enclosed with this issue is an order form — please use this when ordering <u>any</u> material from the Society: sheet music, records, books, etc. This will help Jim Kinnear in filling your orders from stock, and will help Idamay MacInnes in keeping the books straight. It will also guarantee that your order is filled and shipped promptly.

TREEMONISHA ON RECORD!!!

We are delighted to pass along the following good news from Sam Charters:

"I am very pleased - and excited - to be able to announce that the next release on Portents Records is selections from Scott Joplin's opera TREEMONISHA. The album, 'Portents 3,' includes the OVERTURE, the PRELUDE TO ACT 3, the aria THE SACRED TREE, and four songs for chorus: WE'RE GOIN' AROUND, WE WILL REST AWHILE, AUNT DINAH HAS BLOWED DE HORN, and A REAL SLOW DRAG. For the second side of the album, Ann has recorded five more Joplin rags, including two - REFLECTION RAG and BETHENA - which are closely related to the composition of the opera. The other three are ORIGINAL RAGS, ELITE SYNCOPATIONS and SOMETHING DOING.

"Like everyone else, I first heard of the opera in 'They All Played Ragtime,' and I've been trying to find some way of doing it for several years. Ann and I stopped in Washington in 1958 and went through the score at the Library of Congress and we found it very interesting, despite the obvious changes that Joplin had made in the music in an effort to suit the New York musicians that he brought the music to. As you probably remember, the chapter I wrote on Joplin in 'Jazz: A History of the New York Scene,' was called 'Treemonisha' and that most of the new material I found for the chapter was concerned with the opera and Joplin's efforts to have it performed.

"The problem we had in getting someone to do it was that it needs a musical director who is familiar with ragtime and has also a professional grasp of the opera stage, since it is an opera in every sense of the word. We were fortunate in meeting an opera director named Ted Puffer who has always liked Jelly Roll Morton and what classic ragtime he'd been able to hear, and this year he has been directing an opera workshop at Utah State University in Logan, Utah. Rudi Blesh let Ann and me look over his copy of the score this winter, and we wrote to Ted describing some of the music. When we next heard from him he told us he'd gotten a research grant from the University to meet the expenses of having chorus parts printed - forty copies of each! - for some of the ensembles. When we realized that he'd gotten the music we were so excited that we called Utah and he told us that he thought the music was delightful and that he was performing three of the choruses from the opera at a concert at the end of February.

"Thanks to Ted's interest, TREEMONISHA finally received its first public performance, even if it was only some parts of the music. It has been more than fifty years since Joplin finally finished it, and it has lain unplayed and unperformed all during this time. The concert was held on February 28th, 1965, in Logan, and the program included the Bach MAGNIFICAT, and some choral music by Hindemith, as well as a group of opera choruses which opened with the TREEMONISHA selections. The Concert Chorale, the group that sang them, found them very exciting to perform, and the audience was delighted. Ted ended the group with the REAL SLOW DRAG, and he introduced the piece by reading to the audience the instructions for doing the dance that Joplin includede with the score, and inviting everyone to dance in the aisles if they felt likeit.

"The recording took nine days to complete, and there were hours and hours of rehearsal needed for the final polishing. It always takes a while for new music to become familiar enough so that you can perform it, and the choruses and the solos were not only new, but very different from most of the music

that the singers had been performing. We also had problems with the overture. I know that there are many people who feel that Joplin's music is so simple that he couldn't possibly have meant anyone to play it as written, and there were moments when I would have liked to talk over the music with some of them. There was one passage in particular, toward the end of the overture, which has the left hand moving in ascending major sixths in sixteenth notes while the right hand plays an ascending passage in sixteenths, with the thumb, against a descending chromatic run in 32nds beginning an octave above it. We would have been very happy for any suggestions on how to improvise at this point.

"I had been through most of the opera, playing it over on the piano, but I was very surprised at how much better it sounded than I had expected. There are difficulties with some of the pieces, but the chorus AUNT DINAH HAS BLOWED DE HORN is a delight, and the PRELUDE TO ACT 3 turned out to be pure Joplin rag - the first strain is somewhat reminiscent of GLADIOLUS RAG - broadened into the concert idiom. There was also, for Ann and me, much valuable insight into Joplin's thinking as a composer. Although the choruses all have a piano accompaniment, the rehearsals required much work with just the voices by themselves, and I realized for the first time how much Joplin thought in terms of linear relationships between the treble and bass lines and the inner melodic voices. All in all the nine days were a very full experience.

"I hope that everyone who is interested in Scott Joplin's music will have a chance at least to hear the record; we will be glad to mail copies directly to anyone who orders it."

Mail your orders direct to: Sam Charters, 209 W. 109th St., New York, N.Y. Price of the album is $4.98, postage paid.

BOOK REVIEW by Gary Ellison

"The Jazz Story" by Dave Dexter, Jr.; Prentice-Hall Pub. $4.95

"The Jazz Story" is well written. It does for the development of jazz approximately what TAPR does for ragtime. The table of contents tells just about what is in the book . . . "The Scene Today" . . . "How it Started . . . "Hello, LOUIS (Armstrong) . . . "Chicago and the Golden Era" . . . "On to New York" . . . "Jazz in the West."

In "Jazz in the West," Dexter discusses ragtime. He mentions Louis Chauvin, Scott Joplin, Joe Jordan, Charlie Thompson, Artie Matthews and others. His feeling about ragtime and the St. Louis players is well stated on page 74: "Ragtime died out as jazz bands swept into popularity, but there most certainly wouldn't have been any jazz had there not been ragtime pianists. St. Louis musicians deserve more recognition than they've been given."

In the chapter dealing with singers he has some nice things to say about Jelly Roll Morton and Leadbelly. Also included are several famous jazz solos written out, some pictures, a modern jazz bibliography and a listing of the story of jazz on records.

This book, although it doesn't dwell on ragtime, does place ragtime in a good position in the evolution of syncopated music. It would make a good addition to a ragtimer's library as a picture in perspective depicting popular music and the musicians who brought it about.

FINNEY'S ORCHESTRA

by Tom Shea

DELIGHTFUL VOYAGE.

Thirty-First Boys Had It Coming From Cuba.

SAVANNAH, Ga., April 15.—The transport Thomas with the Thirty-first Michigan and Third Engineers arrived here this afternoon Monday morning after spending 72 hours on the bay on route home from Cienfuegos. The anchor was cast at 8:30 o'clock and the soldiers settled down to spend their last night on the ship as comfortably as possible. This kept most of them busy as it was terribly cold.

The joint came aboard at 7 o'clock yesterday morning and the Thomas proceeded to Daufuski Island, where the men will go into quarantine for five days.

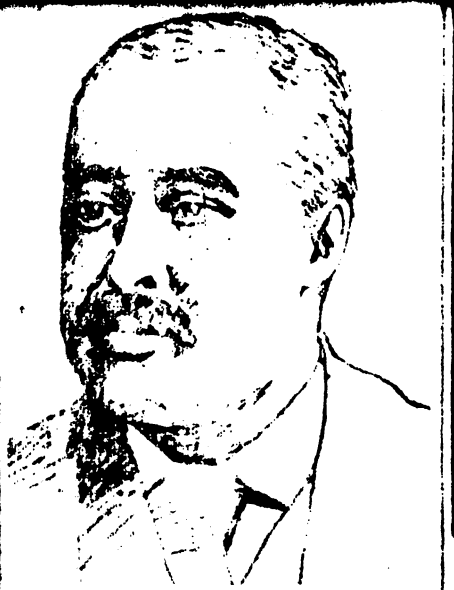
The health of the regiment is excellent, not a man being sick on board the boat and everything will be made to get the regiment out of quarantine at as early a date as possible.

The trip from Cienfuegos was a delightful one. The weather was as fine as could be desired, not a man being sick during the entire voyage.

Col. Pettigrew, chief quartermaster of the district, is now at the quarantine dock on the Thomas with an engineer out at Augusta instead of Savannah, as previously ordered. This has caused quite a stir among the officers and men, as it means a part of their travel pay.

The Michigan boys will probably be quarantined at the quarantine station. The weather is rather cold and decidedly uncomfortable for those who have had to take

GIANT RYE WHISKY TRUST



THEODORE FINNEY,
The old orchestra leader who died last night.

ought to succeed. Death is believed to be due to heart disease as he had suffered from a similar attack some time previously. Coroner Hoban will hold an investigation this morning, upon the result of which will depend the necessity for holding an inquest.

Theodore Finney was one of the best known colored men in Detroit. He was born in Columbus O., Sept. 1, 1857 and came to Detroit when 20 years of age. His first venture was with the late "Ed." Booker in the saloon business on Bates street, adjoining the old Cadillac square market in 1883. But the partnership and the business soon became unpleasant to Finney and he withdrew. In company with the late John Bailey he organized the Bailey & Finney orchestra, which they conducted together until Bailey's death in 1894. The orchestra was then reorganized and has since borne Finney's name. Finney was an accomplished violinist and a musical director of rare gift, possessing the faculty of securing hearty co-operation from all men. He commanded numerous places of dance music, and has for years played on the Frank E. Kirby during the excursion season to Put-in-Bay, where a large portion of Detroit's population has enjoyed the light fantastic to the music of Finney's big dance hall on Middle Bass Island. He was a member of the Detroit City Band, Iroquois and other social clubs, and a thirty-second degree Mason.

Finney has been a widower for nine years, and his only son died about six years ago. His only surviving relatives in this city are [illegible]

SA
which stands
cures. Your
"We always
What
yea s

TOUCH TEND

"The Old Songs"
Wonde

A young woman
charming manner sing
at Winderland this w
favor. The power who
the dashing
of
ist, and the little me
songs, is pleasantly su
Courtney appears and

Miss MAUD
Who stage the

Ever since I read about Finney's Orchestra in "They All Played Ragtime," I have waited for someone to write the band up more completely. No one did, so finally out of desperation, and loyalty to my adopted hometown - Detroit - I decided to try it myself.

Kurtz Myers and Larry Brown of the Detroit Public Library music and performing arts department got me started by leading me to appropriate books, sheet music, and biographical material; and by putting me in touch with one of the members of Finney's Orchestra - Mr. Clyde B. Hayes.

Mr. Hayes, who joined Finney's Orchestra in 1905 as a string bass player, kindly consented to an interview at his home where Walt Gower and I spent a delightful evening with Mr. and Mrs. Hayes happily picking their brains for every bit of information we could get about the band and about Fred S. Stone.

Charlie Rasch and Mike Montgomery helped with the list of Stone's compositions, and Walt Gower did the photographs. Thanks to you all. -T.S.

* * * * * * * * * *

"Old Man Finney" died April 17, 1899. He was 62. The next day the Detroit News published his obituary and picture and gave them ten column-inches of space. Finney was one of the best known men in Detroit. His obituary began, "Death came suddenly to Theodore Finney, the colored orchestra director, about 8 o'clock last night. He was riding a wheel* on Michigan Avenue near Griswold Street, when a feeling of faintness compelled him to dismount, and, sitting on the curb to rest, he expired before assistance could be summoned. Death is believed to be due to heart disease...."

Thoedore Finney was born in Columbus, Ohio in 1837 and came to Detroit when he was twenty years old. After a short try at the saloon business, he and a friend named John Bailey organized the Bailey and Finney Orchestra, which they conducted together until Bailey's death in 1870. Finney then reorganized the band and led it, under his name, until his death 29 years later.

Finney was an accomplished violinist and his requirements for membership in the band were high for those early times. In the first years of the band's existence, the Negro population in Detroit was small, and in order to get a full complement of musicians, several white players were used. Later, as the Negro population grew, and colored musicians became available, this was unnecessary.

Finney's steady popularity and reputation as a good man to work for made it easy for him to get and keep the very finest of Detroit's Negro musicians. His Orchestra played at Detroit's finest clubs, cafes and ballrooms, marched along Woodward Avenue, gave concerts and played for over thirty consecutive years on the excursion boats of the Ashley-Dustin Line.

For the years of its existence about which anything is known, Finney's Orchestra was a well disciplined organization of trained, reading musicians. The band's repertoire was extensive and in addition to the usual waltzes, marches, polkas, minuets, schottisches and quadrilles, included selections from the classics and several original numbers by Finney himself. It is not known whether the Orchestra ever played ragtime while it was under his direction. At least one Detroit musical pioneer who knew him says that Finney didn't like the then new, syncopated music and refused to play it. It is known, however, that the Cakewalk and the Two Step were very popular dance forms in Detroit in the 1890's and it seems unlikely that a canny businessman like Finney would have refused to give his public what they wanted.

*Bicycle.

In the early 1890's two men who were to figure prominently in the awakening Detroit musical world joined Finney's Orchestra. They were violinist Ben Shook and Canadian pianist, baritone horn player Fred S. Stone.

Shook was born in Cleveland about 1875 and studied music at Fisk College in Nashville. He became the biggest single musical contractor in Detroit, at one time managing almost 100 musicians. His bands played all over Detroit, and in 1918-1919 he had three bands as far away as Chicago playing at the Edgewater Beach Resort. In addition to his activities as businessman and working musician, he composed several numbers including DAT GAL OF MINE and IRENE.

Fred S. Stone's formal musical education was apparently not extensive, but in spite of this he was not only able to play up to Finney's high standards, but also to contribute arrangements and original compositions to the band's already formidable "book." When Finney died in 1899, Stone took over the management of the band.

This photograph, which appears in "They All Played Ragtime," was taken shortly after Stone became manager.

A Famous Ragtime Band

Front row (left to right): Ben Shook, violin and French horn; Fred Lyons, violin; Bill Stone, piano and bass viol; Fred S. Stone, piano and baritone horn; James Hayes, violin; Charlie Griffin, violin. Middle row: John Day, alto horn and bass viol; Joe C. Johnson, clarinet; Bob Cain, drums; John Smallwood, clarinet; Frank Smith, trumpet; Sammy Russell, flute and piccolo; John W. Johnson, trumpet; Will Johnson, flute; Ed Beeler, drums. Back row: John Ward, trombone; William Pfeiffer, bass viol; Frank Mosby, bass viol; Charlie Stone, trombone and piano.

Ragtime put Detroit at the top of the national musical heap. Although music publishing in Detroit had begun in 1851, the first forty-odd years produced very few tunes that gained more than local popularity. But with the coming of ragtime in the 90's and the publication of this genre by Whitney-Warner, Belcher and Davis, and other Detroit houses, Detroit became a national music centre. Kerry Mills, Percy Wenrich, Hughie Cannon, Charles N. Daniels and Fred S. Stone were high on the list of composers whose tunes helped put ragtime across on a national basis and Detroit second only to New York in the production of hits.

Beginning in 1895 with the publication of THE INDIAN TWO STEP, Stone's name appears as composer on at least fifteen numbers and as arranger on one more. The following is a list of all known, published compositions by Stone:

1895 "The Indian Two Step" dedicated to the Detroit Indians. Central Music Pub. Co.

1896 "La Albacete" Spanish waltzes. Detroit Music Co.
"Mackinac" march, two step, dedicated to the pianists of Detroit. Detroit Music Co.

1898 "A Lady of Quality Waltzes" Whitney-Warner
"Ma Ragtime Baby" two step for piano. Whitney-Warner

1899 "Ma Ragtime Baby" original ragtime song. Copyrighted by Whitney-Warner, published by Myll Bros., New York
"The Bos'n Rag" cakewalk. Whitney-Warner
"Aunt Jemima's Cakewalk" ragtime march and two step. By J. W. Johnson and Fred S. Stone. Broadwell and Wolf Publications
"Ragtime Rastus" march and two step. By Adalbert W. May, arranged by Fred S. Stone. Published by Thos. D. Buick

1900 "Elseeta" march, Whitney-Warner [illegible]

1902 "Sue" march, two step characteristic. Whitney-Warner
"Silks and Rags" waltz. Whitney-Warner

1903 "Belle of the Philippines" Whitney-Warner

1905 "Belinda" Remick

1906 "Melody at Twilight" intermezzo. Remick

1908 "Stone's Barn Dance" Remick

1909 "Detroit Wholesalers and Manufacturers" Detroit Wholesalers and Manufacturers

Stone's best known composition was probably MA RAGTIME BABY. The resounding success of this rag is said to have saved the Whitney-Warner publishing house from failure. It was played frequently by Finney's Orchestra, and remained a favorite in Detroit for many years. The song version, published a year later, had words by Stone's brother Charlie. MA RAGTIME BABY was available on piano rolls and was even played by Sousa's Band at the Paris Exposition in the early 1900's where it won first prize for being the most unique in style and rhythm.

Stone is said to have been a quiet man who, though distant and businesslike in the managing of the band, treated his men with fairness and had their respect in return. He was a very able pianist with a smooth, legato style. He improvised well and sometimes added his own touches to popular numbers, though never departing from the score completely. The band's total membership eventually grew to nearly forty but was frequently split up into combinations of seven or eight pieces. On these occasions, Stone would supply the parts for the missing instruments on the piano, reading them off the arrangement.

After Stone took over at least, the band played many rags, including MA RAGTIME BABY, MAPLE LEAF RAG, CREOLE BELLES, AT A GEORGIA CAMPMEETING and BLACK AND WHITE RAG. The rags were played at a fast tempo with the melody taken on violin, clarinet or trumpet while the customers danced the Two Step. The instrumentation commonly used for dancing consisted of trumpet, violin, clarinet, trombone, piano, drums and string bass (which was always played with a bow). In later years, the lineup for dancing included a sousaphone instead of string bass, and a banjo. Trumpeter John W. Johnson, who is pictured in the band photograph, frequently brought down the house by playing rags through the first time in the regular register, as written, then moving up an octave and adding variations the second time through.

In the early 1900's, the band usually used standard publisher's arrangements, many being urged on them by the song pluggers that followed them from job to job. By the late teens and early 20's though, special arrangements by Hank Finney (no relation to Theodore Finney) and Harry P. Guy (who wrote ECHOES FROM THE SNOWBALL CLUB) were used that incorporated effects which were carefully studied by other bandsmen. William McKinney of McKinney's Cotton Pickers was among the musicians who came to listen to the band and "steal their stuff." While the band was heard over radio station WJR in Detroit beginning in 1925, they never recorded, so the exact amount of stuff they had to steal is unknown.

By the time Bill McKinney became interested in the band, its name had been changed to the Ben Shook Orchestra. When Fred S. Stone died in 1912 or 1913, the band split into two groups, with Ben Shook and Charlie Stone each taking over a portion of the original band. Both factions claimed title to the original name, and the battle became so heated that it had to be taken to the courts to be settled. The courts decreed that the Shook group use for its name "Finney's Original Orchestra," while Charlie Stone's should use "Finney's Famous Orchestra." This decision was most unsatisfactory and caused a great deal of confusion, so Shook soon changed the name of his group to the Ben Shook Orchestra. This group contained the majority of the original membership and lasted well into the 30's. Charles Stone's group, on the other hand, was disbanded about 1920.

With the dissolution of his orchestra, Shook brought an end to an organization that had lasted, more or less intact, from the Civil War to the days of the New Deal. When compared to the usual short life of a modern band, it seems almost unbelievable that Finney's Orchestra could have survived through sixty years of changing tastes in popular music. "Old Man" Finney really built 'em to last.

FROM OUR READERS

Roy J. Carew, Washington, D.C.: "I am pleased to see Jelly Roll Morton's music gain the recognition it deserves, and The Ragtime Society has played quite an important part in that. The Society also has done a great deal for reviving interest in good ragtime. It's too bad that Morton couldn't have lived long enough to take part in it all. Incidentally, if his figures were correct, he would have been 80 years old this coming September."

Dave Lorentz, Bloomington, Indiana: "The Indiana University Jazz Society, which I founded, presented a boogie and ragtime concert on Sunday, May 30th; the rags consisted of THE CASCADES, FROG LEGS RAG, PATRICIA RAG, ST. LOUIS RAG, James P. Johnson's CAPRICE RAG, and Jelly Roll Morton's BIG FAT HAM."

John Astle, 32 Lammas Road, Coundon, Coventry, England: "Is there a possibility of asking, through the Newsletter, if any of the subscribers can locate for me a copy of 'From Tinfoil to Stereo'? This book - the history of the phonograph - was never published in the U.K. and is now out of print in the U.S." Anyone who can help John with his query should write to him direct.

Ken Vinen, Cobourg, Ontario: "As a teenager, I was fortunate in being able to work with an elderly piano repair man at Pippen and Sons Piano and Organ House in Edmonton, Alberta. With this background, plus a great deal of reading and practical experience, I am quite competent on repair and service to all types of automatic music machines, and have done many restoration jobs for people who are fortunate enough to own any of these fascinating instruments."

Ken goes on to say that he owns a Willis electrically powered Ampico Reproducing piano and about 300 rolls, plus an excellent collection of early recordings dating back to the Edison wax cylinders, and the machines with the exposed morning glory horns to reproduce them.

Ken adds: "I have a burning desire to obtain a coin-operated piano of any kind, size or condition . . . I can't say money is no object, but I have a very understanding bank manager." Anyone wanting to get in touch should write Ken Vinen, Advertising Manager, Radio Station CHUC, Box 520, Cobourg, Ontario, Canada.

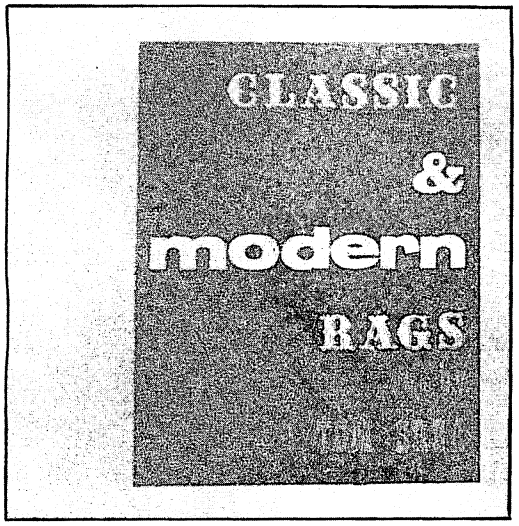
We had a note from the Research Director of Opus International Limited, who is delving into the musical history of Canada. She asked if we had ever run across a Frank Holland who recently started up a player piano museum in England. It is housed in a condemned church on the outskirts of London; his collection is described as "quite fascinating, though somewhat hilarious through its bizarre setting and mass animation." Can any of our U.K. readers tell us more about this? The same lady told us that she recently ran across a player piano in Ottawa which was equipped with mouse-proof pedals!

In the May-June, 1965 issue, Peter Hanley inquired about the Arthur Marshall and Charlie Thompson records which Rudi Blesh mentions in TAPR. John Gleason, East Lansing, Michigan, recently made a phone call to Rudi Blesh, and reports: "According to Mr. Blesh, the records were made by him and Miss Janis in 1950. The masters were defective (bad material, I believe) and were impossible to issue commercially. Before they could re-record, Marshall had his stroke and was unable to play."

John adds: "Re the Joplin roll of W. C. Handy's OLE MISS RAG -- in Handy's book, 'Father of the Blues,' OLE MISS is listed as an 'instrumental' -- no mention of piano or rag. Russ Cassidy suspects the roll version might be as much Joplin as Handy. Do you know anyone with a sheet music copy of OLE MISS? Russ says he's never been able to find one." The closest we can come, John, is Handy's OLE MISS BLUES contained in his 'Treasury of the Blues" -- if this is any help to you, let us know. Otherwise, maybe our readers can come up with some information on this rag.

* * * * * *

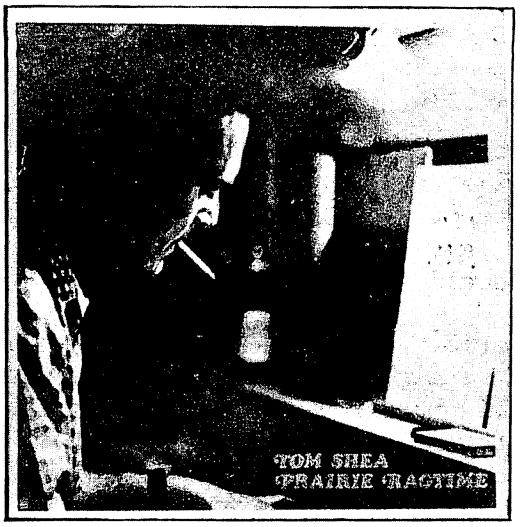
When reviewing THE ST. LOUIS RAGTIMERS (Volumes 1 & 2) in the last issue, we neglected to mention that these two albums are available from Trebor J. Tichenor, Box 8568, Sappington, Missouri, 63026. We're not positive about the price, but believe it to be $5 each.



CLASSIC & MODERN RAGS/Tom Shea

(RSR-1) The Ragtime Society

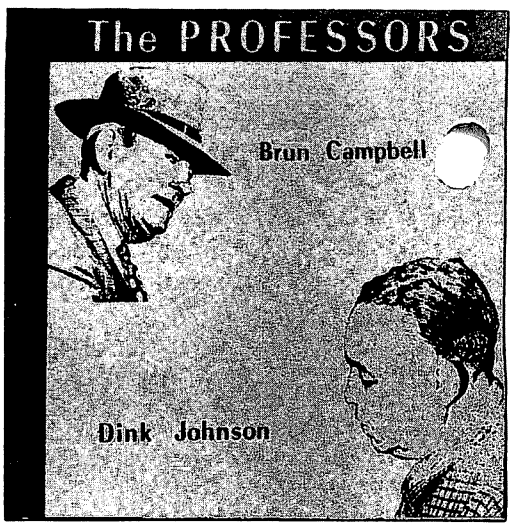
*Price: $4.50 ea., $5 overseas



PRAIRIE RAGTIME/Tom Shea

(RSR-2) The Ragtime Society

*Price: $4.50 ea., $5 overseas



THE PROFESSORS 2 Vols/Campbell, Johnson, Bowman

(ESR-1201/1202) Euphonic Records

*Price: $4.50 ea., $5 overseas

ESSAY IN RAGTIME/Ann Charters

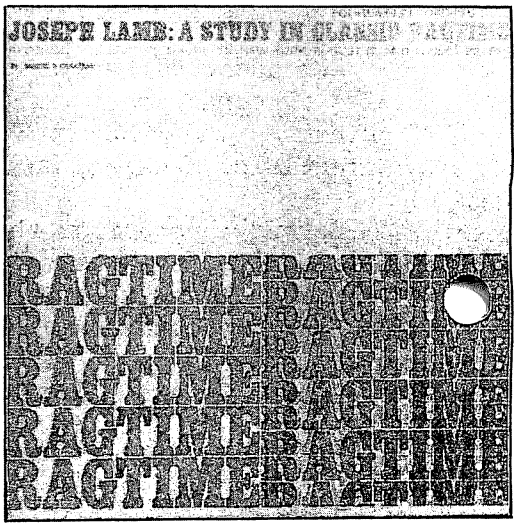
(FG-3563) Folkways Records

Price: $5 ea., $5.50 overseas

A JOPLIN BOUQUET/Ann Charters

(Portents-1) Portents Records

*Price: $4.50 ea., $5 overseas



JOE LAMB: A Study in Classic Ragtime

(FG-3562) Folkways Records

Price: $5 ea., $5.50 overseas

MAX MORATH: Waltzes, Shouts, etc.

(LN-24066) Epic Records

*Price: $4.50 ea., $5 overseas

OH, PLAY THAT THING!/Max Morath

(LN-24106) Epic Records

*Price: $4.50 ea., $5 overseas

THIS IS RAGTIME NOW!/Hank Jones

(ABC-496) ABC-Paramount

Price: $5 ea., $5.50 overseas

*Any albums marked with an asterisk may be ordered at a discount rate of two for $8.50 postpaid ($9 overseas).